

## Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SS-15 NSC-05 SEC-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00

INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-01 USIA-06 PRS-01 SP-02 TRSE-00

EB-07 JUSE-00 L-02 SCA-01 /059 W

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R 141750Z FEB 75

FM AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9353

INFO AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

AMEMBASSY PANAMA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAN JOSE 0651

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PGOV, CS

SUBJECT: VESCO'S YACHT DRAWS CRITICISM

1. "LA REPUBLICA" ON FEBRUARY 13 RAN A FRONT-PAGE STORY, ACCOMPANIED BY A LARGE PICTURE, ON VESCO'S YACHT IN PUNTARENAS CALLED THE "JOYA POCA." THE POINT OF THE NEWSPAPER'S UNUSUALLY DETAILED AND THOROUGH INVESTIGATIVE REPORT WAS THAT THE "JOYA POCA" HAS BEEN IN COSTA RICAN WATERS WELL BEYOND THE PERMITTED THREE MONTHS TEMPORARY PERIOD ALLOWED UNDER THE LAW WITHOUT PAYING NECESSARY TAXES. THE REPORT WITH THE HELP OF THE PHOTO EMPHASIZED THE LUXURIOUS CHARACTERISTICS AND SOPHISTICATED EQUIPMENT ON THE BOAT AND CONVINCINGLY PUBLISHED ON THE INSIDE PAGES PHOTOSTATIC COPIES OF OFFICIAL CUSTOMS DOCUMENTS WHICH ESTABLISH THAT THE "JOYA POCA" ARRIVED IN PUNTARENAS IN AUGUST AND LEFT ON JANUARY 6, 1975, WITHOUT PAYING IMPORT TAXES.

"LA REPUBLICA" POINTED OUT THAT ITS PHOTO WAS TAKEN WITHIN THE LAST WEEK AND PUNTARENAS PORT OFFICIALS VERIFIED THAT THE BOAT HAS BEEN BACK IN PUNTARENAS SUBSEQUENT TO JANUARY 6.

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2. BASING ITS INFORMATION ON JACKSON COMMITTEE REPORTS, "LA REPUBLICA" NOTES THAT THE "JOYA POCA" IS VALUED AT LEAST AT \$300,000; THEREFORE, VESCO OWES THE GOVERNMENT AN EQUAL AMOUNT TO CONFORM TO THE 100-PERCENT IMPORT TAX.

3. ON FEBRUARY 14 BOTH "LA NACION" AND "LA REPUBLICA" ("EXCELSIOR" HAS NOT MENTIONED THE STORY) ATTACKED PRESIDENT ODUBER FOR PERMITTING VESCO PRIVILEGES WHICH HE EXPLICITLY ANNOUNCED ON DECEMBER 7, AT THE HEIGHT OF THE ANTI-VESCO SCANDAL AND IN REPLY TO THE CITIZENS' COMMITTEE, WOULD NEVER BE AFFORDED BY THE GOVERNMENT.

4. COMMENT: THE VESCO ISSUE HAS BEEN RELATIVELY DORMANT SINCE THE ANTI-VESCO CAMPAIGN WANED JUST BEFORE CHRISTMAS. IT IS KNOWN TO THE EMBASSY, HOWEVER, THAT BOTH RODRIGO MADRIGAL, DIRECTOR OF "LA REPUBLICA," AND GUIDO FERNANDEZ, DIRECTOR OF "LA NACION," HAVE BEEN DIGGING INTO THE VESCO ISSUE IN ORDER TO REFOCUS PUBLIC ATTENTION. THIS MAY BE FIRST OF SEVERAL REPORTS TOUCHING ON DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF THE VESCO ISSUE. ANOTHER TO COME MAY LOOK AT VESCO'S ALLEGED FINANCING OF A NEW CHAIN OF GAS STATIONS RECENTLY PURCHASED BY CARI, S.A., CALLED GASNACO. CARI IS THE SAME FIRM THAT WITH \$2 MILLION ALLEGEDLY FROM VESCO BOUGHT OUT THE GULF DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM LAST YEAR AND SET UP A NEW CHAIN OF GAS STATIONS CALLED GASOTICA.

5. WITH REGARD TO THE "JOYA POCA" STORY, THE GOVERNMENT WILL CLEARLY HAVE TO RESPOND GIVEN THE FACTUAL EVIDENCE PRESENTED. IT IS CONCEIVABLE THAT VESCO, TO GET OFF THE HOOK, MAY PAY HIS IMPORT TAXES ON HIS NEW 450 SL MERCEDES AND APPLY HIS PENSIONADO VEHICLE EXEMPTION TO THE BOAT. THIS APPARENTLY WOULD BE A LEGALLY ACCEPTABLE MANEUVER UNDER THE LAW, BUT COULD BE A BIT HARD FOR THE PUBLIC TO SWALLOW.

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## Message Attributes

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